

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference?

The following slides are intended to be used as suggestions for planning a Women in Agriculture program. The material has been compiled and edited by Laurie Wolinski, Extension Associate, University of Delaware, using information from Delaware, Nebraska, and Oklahoma Women in Ag programs. Special thanks to Dr. Damona Doye, Regents Professor and Extension Economist, Oklahoma State University and Beth Eberspacher, Administrative Coordinator, North Central Risk Management Education Center.

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference?

Example are available for some of the suggested tools that are listed in this document. Tools that are in [blue text](#) have examples that you may refer too, for further understanding.

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

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# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference?

~ Why plan a women in agriculture conference? ~

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

- Educational programming for women is not a new concept for Extension. Girls clubs (and boys clubs) of the early 1900's actually helped to mold the Home Economics programming in Extension.
- In the past, programming for women might have focused on the role of the farm wife, through the Family and Consumer Agents. Other programs, for women, were structured through 4-H programs.

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

Today – Women are recognized as operators in the farming business, some are the principal operator. According to NASS:

Women Operators		
	2002	1997
Total Women Operators	847,680	
Women as Principal Operator	236,269	209,784

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

- Outreach & educational programming efforts of Extension have been both reactive and proactive, as our clientele and audiences have changed over the years.
- As educators, we can respond to the programming needs of “women in agriculture” by recognizing women as partners and/or principal operators in their agribusiness by offering educational workshops geared to them as well as to other women who are somehow involved the agriculture industry.

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

~Target Audience ~

Who will benefit from the  
program?

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

The ***Target Audience*** might include:

- Women involved in production agriculture:
  - Conventional, Sustainable, Organic, Alternative
- Landowners
- Spouses/Partners
- Off-farm children with farm interest, inheritances
- Agricultural Educators
- Agricultural Agency Employees
- Higher Ed students considering a career in production agriculture

# Objectives for planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

Educational programming offered to “ag women” has evolved to meet their changing needs. Educational programming should continue to meet their needs as technology and practices evolve.

1985 - One of the first Women in Ag programs was developed in Nebraska

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ~Objectives~

- Education
- Networking
- Empowerment

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ***Objective - Education***

***Educational*** programs that include workshops which:

▪ Have relevance to their farm business and/or their personal life, for example:

- Legal
- Health
- Insurance
- Marketing
- Management
- Production
- Policy

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ***Objective - Education***

- Offer hands-on workshops for skill building, for example:
  - Computer Workshops
  - Equipment Use
  - Pasture Walks

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ***Objective - Education***

- Include testimonials from other women in panel or round table format, for example:
  - Agri-tourism
  - Farm markets
  - Community Supported Agriculture Associations

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ***Objective - Education***

Intended ***Educational*** Outcomes for Participants:

- Increased Knowledge of workshop topic
- Improved Attitudes of workshop material
- Increased Interest in workshop topic
- Increased Awareness in workshop topic
- Improved Confidence in using material presented in workshop
- Intention to use information

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ***Objective - Networking***

***Networking*** opportunities - this is as important as the educational workshops.

Examples of experiences they share with each other:

- Marketing their product
- Family communication
- How to deal with labor issues
- Customer relations

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ***Objective - Networking***

- Not all meals need a speaker – this is a key time for networking
- Longer breaks allow time for networking
- Facilities that have comfortable lounge areas
- Provide a participant list in the registration packet
  - e-mail addresses
  - home address and county
- If feasible, consider offering to establish an e-mail group or listserv

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ***Objective - Empowerment***

### ***Empowerment –***

At the close of the conference, women should feel energized, confident and empowered to manage their agribusiness with improved understanding and skills. As a result, they will make more informed decisions to improve their agribusiness.

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference?

~ Funding Opportunities ~

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ~ Funding Opportunities ~

*This is not an inclusive list, but suggestions for grant opportunities.*

### – Risk Management Education Centers

- North Central Risk Management Education: [www.farmdoc.uiuc.edu/ncrisk](http://www.farmdoc.uiuc.edu/ncrisk)
- Northeast Center For Risk Management Education: [www.necrme.org](http://www.necrme.org)
- Southern Region Risk Management Education Center: [srrme.tamu.edu](http://srrme.tamu.edu)
- Western Center for Risk Management Education: [westrme.wsu.edu](http://westrme.wsu.edu)

### – Risk Management Agency: [www.rma.usda.gov](http://www.rma.usda.gov)

### – CSREES/USDA: [www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/funding.cfm](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/funding.cfm)

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference?

~ Planning Committee ~

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ~ Planning Committee ~

- Establish a planning committee & chair
  - Committee members can consist of educators in area of Agriculture, FCS, agency professionals, as well as the target audience.
  - Have regular meetings or communication to report progress & identify where additional work is needed.

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ~ Planning Committee ~

### – Involving Target Audience

- It is important that the target audience is involved, so that they have some buy in
- It is not just another Extension program
- They will encourage friends and acquaintances to come, etc.
- May need to help pay for travel if planning meetings are held some distance from a producer's home.

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference?

~ Interest Survey ~

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ~ Interest Survey ~

### Interest Survey –

- Mail or phone
- Random and/or selective, or farm organization women
- Information needed:
  - Best time of year for conference
  - Weekdays or weekend preference
  - Length of Conference
  - Educational Topics – what topics are wanted and needed
  - Suggestions for speakers

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference?

~ Program Development ~

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## *Program Development*

- Theme
- Conference Agenda
  - Length – 1 day, 1 ½ days, 2 days, evening program
  - Number of workshop sessions, general sessions
  - Time for networking
  - A goal is to have participants depart on a positive note, with some sense of closure at the end of the day.

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## *Program Development*

### *Speakers*

- Women - this includes women as
  - keynote speakers
  - concurrent session and workshop speakers
  - panel members
- Men, who relate well to women should also be considered for the various speaking opportunities.
- The key is to identify the speakers who will do the best overall job in addressing the topic of interest. If you include women who have not done a lot of public speaking, it is important to work with them in finding a role in which they are comfortable, perhaps as part of a team.

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## *Program Development*

- Keynote speakers
  - How many will depend on length of conference.
  - General sessions – beginning or end of day, or lunchtime
- Educational Topics for workshop sessions
  - Cover areas of risk management and/or what your grant states
  - Offer both beginner and advanced level sessions
  - Include something light: exercise, history or heritage related topics

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference?

~ Logistics ~

Facility

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference *Facility*

Make facility arrangements well in advance – sometimes up to a year in advance!

- Site visit
  - Meet with Sales person, ask questions
    - Cost?
    - Discuss space requirements
      - Registration Tables
      - Meals
      - Breakouts, General Session
      - Networking area – breaks
      - Exhibits
    - Contract
      - Know the important dates in the contract
      - A/V rules and charges
      - Sleeping room block

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference *Facility*

- Can University's assist with planning?
  - Some University's have a Conference service that will handle *facility* negotiations and details so your focus can be on the program and environment.
  - University may be eligible for tax exemption that may help offset the costs of paying for such services.

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference?

~ Logistics ~

Speakers

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## *Speakers*

Secure speakers early in planning process

- **Workshop Speakers**
  - Extension professionals
  - Agency professionals
  - Commercial business professional
  - Farm women
  - Often times, the keynote speaker will also present a workshop
- **Keynote Speakers**
  - Check out other Women in Ag program websites for ideas.
  - Speaker should be able to relate to the theme of your conference.

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## *Speakers*

- Who communicates with speakers?
  - This needs to be identified early in the planning process.
  - A timeline should be established for all communication steps.

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## *Speakers*

- Communication with Speakers
  - A letter or form outlining the following:
    - Conference dates, facility name & address
    - Will their registration be waived?
    - Will they participate in meals, which meals?
    - Title of talk with brief promotional information
    - Length of talk
    - A/V needs
    - Biography
    - Will they need hotel accommodations?
    - Explain travel and expense reimbursement.
    - Give the speaker your contact information and date to return form.
  - Send a confirmation of all the above to speakers, along with a conference program (or draft) at earliest possible date.

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference?

~ Logistics ~

Budget

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## *Budget*

Income – Registration fee and Sponsor Income

– Registration fee considerations

- Cover the cost of meals, or
- Cover the cost of the facility rental, or
- Cover the cost of speakers, or
- Some combination of above
- Remember, if it is a two-day event, participants may also have to pay for lodging

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## *Budget*

### Income

- Registration fee and Sponsor Income
  - **It is important to keep costs to participants low** as otherwise you will end up with mostly agency or university people who have accounts for things like this. In some states, women are accustomed to having Farm Bureau conferences, for instance, largely subsidized so you must compete not only for participant's limited time, but also their expectation for little or no cost.
- Sponsor (see section IX)
  - Monetary
  - Grants

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference *Budget*

## Expenses

- Speakers
  - Workshop Speakers
    - Workshop session speakers may need mileage reimbursement, but hopefully, that is all
  - Keynote Speakers
    - If budget is tight, look for speakers close by, where travel expenses won't be an issue
    - Ask sponsors (Farm Credit, Farm Bureau) to help support cost of keynote speakers
- **Publicity** – advertising costs can be expensive
- **Mailing and Registration** – consider cost of postage. Bulk mail is less expensive but not as speedy as U.S. mail

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## *Budget*

Expenses cont..

### – Facility

- Food
  - Meals and breaks
  - Receptions
- Meeting Room Space
  - General Session and breakout rooms
- Audio Visual
  - Bring your own equipment (laptops, projectors) when possible
  - LCD projectors are very expensive to rent
  - Know what type of A/V equipment your invited speakers will require

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## *Budget*

Expenses cont...

– Facility cont.

- Service Charge ( somewhere around 20 %)

– Food, rooms and equipment rental

– Unexpected circumstances:

If you are operating out of a university account, it important to negotiate cover if unanticipated events cause expenses to exceed revenue, for instance, because a snowstorm limits attendance.

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference?

~ Logistics ~

Registration

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ***Mailing and Registration***

*Consider cost of postage. Bulk mail is less expensive but not as speedy as U.S. mail*

- County agent's mailing lists
- Ask agencies to include registration flyer in their mailings
- Check-out counters at agribusiness
- Web
- Email
- Require advance registration and advanced payment -
  - Accurate meal count
  - Can give the speakers an idea of session participants
  - A commitment from participants

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ***Mailing and Registration***

- Registration Material should include:
  - Goal of conference
  - Date(s), Location, Times, Directions to venue
  - Session titles & brief descriptions
  - Keynote speaker(s) - biography & topic
  - Main sponsor or grantor
  - General conference schedule
  - Registration fee & what that includes
  - Deadline
  - Registration form
  - Refund policy

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference?

~ Miscellaneous ~

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## *Miscellaneous*

- Exhibitors
  - donation or registration fee
- Workshop Moderators
  - Participants - another way to involve the audience
  - Co-workers
- Design **Evaluation tool(s)**
  - Whole conference
  - Workshop sessions/speaker
- Facility Walk-thru
  - At least once, twice is best

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ***Miscellaneous***

- Copying and printing handouts
- Conference program printing
- Registration Table – at least two people
- Directional signs within the facility to all the rooms
- Room signs for breakout sessions

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference?

~ Sponsors ~

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## *Sponsors*

- Share the conference goal with potential sponsors
- Local, regional or national agribusiness, commodity groups, chamber of commerce, preventative health organizations, Farm Bureau, Farm Credit, banks/lenders, insurance companies, collaborating universities, Extension, Master Gardener clubs, Magazines, etc...

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ***Sponsors***

- Types of sponsorship:
  - Monetary donation
  - In-kind contribution: food products (if facility allows)
  - Door prizes
  - Registration fee for participants
  - Overnight & travel expenses for participants
  - Conference program printing
  - Speaker related expenses
  - Levels of sponsorship, ie. gold, silver, bronze

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## *Sponsors*

- Recognize sponsors by:
  - Listing every sponsor in the program
  - On name badges if they sponsored participants
  - Table tents if they paid for a food/beverage break
  - Announcement at general session
  - Thank you notes

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference?

~ Publicity ~

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## *Publicity*

- Initial Announcement – Hold the date
  - Postcards, brochures, news releases, ads, speaking time on other ag related programs
  - E-mail, U.S. mail, incorporate into other Extension newsletters, flyers in agency offices and agribusiness stores
  - Include e-mail and phone number for more information

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## *Publicity*

- Utilize Extension and Ag group networks:
  - Regional Extension committees
  - Regional Risk Management Education centers
  - Farm Bureau and commodity women's groups
  - County educator associations
  - University newsletters and websites

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference?

~ Implementation ~

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## *Implementation*

- Registration
  - Name badges
    - Packets or bags
    - Receipts for payment (some will need this)
  - Exhibitors should set up prior to participants arriving
  - Workshop moderators should have packet with workshop name, speaker bio, and evaluations
  - A/V person – available throughout
  - Keep on time – all sessions, meals, etc.

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## *Implementation*

- Registration cont...
  - Door prizes
    - Announce where all participants will see or hear
  - Participants
    - Should see a well executed conference, regardless of any unforeseen issues.
    - They are your greatest asset – treat them with respect and professionalism.

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference?

~ Post Conference ~

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ***Post Conference***

- Thank you letters to (should go out within a week):
  - Speakers
  - Sponsors
  - Committee
  - Moderators
- Reimbursements to speakers – in a timely manner

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference

## ***Post Conference***

- Facility Evaluation
- Summarize conference/workshop evaluations – send summary to speakers/presenters and committee members
- Grant Reporting – keep up with dates
- Start file for the next conference – include suggestions from committee, evaluations, troubleshooting that occurred during planning steps

# Additional Considerations

***Women in Ag*** may be:

Spouses  
Partners  
Daughters  
Sisters  
Landowners  
Widows

This group of women may or may not be married to a farmer, and should not be assumed to be the wife of a farmer.

Be careful and sensitive in the way you refer to your participants, and be sure to communicate this message to your speakers.

# Planning a Women in Agriculture Conference?

For More information visit the National Women  
in Agriculture web site at the Ag Risk Library  
at the University of Minnesota:

<http://www.agrisk.umn.edu/wia>